



THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • FRIDAY, APRIL 29, 2022 • ₹9.00 • PAGES 32 • LATE CITY EDITION



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CHINA BLOCKS RETURN OF 22,000 INDIAN STUDENTS

However, Beijing has allowed students from countries like Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Thailand to come back to China

PRACTICALS PENDING FOR MEDICAL STUDENTS

Thousands of Indian students have enrolled in Chinese universities, mostly to study medicine. They came back to India two years ago when the pandemic started. The students have been attending classes online but it's time for many of them to do practicals. For this, they have to travel to China for in-person classes. But, Beijing is not letting them come back | P9

BEIJING YET TO GIVE A FIRM RESPONSE

Union Health Minister Dr Mansukh Mandaviya has written to Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla to help facilitate the return of Indian students to China to complete their study
■ The Indian government is in touch with China, which has neither given a firm response nor has issued visas to Indian students

CHINA

IS PREFERRED BY INDIAN MED STUDENTS
AS ADMISSIONS EASY AND FEE ARE CHEAP

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VAYANAD • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDRABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOTHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHYAMOGGA • MANGALURU • THIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TRINELVELU • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THIRUSSUR • KALABURGI

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	APR 27	APR 28
NATIONAL AVERAGE		
Fresh cases	2,982	3,101
Recoveries	2,257	2,563
Deaths	32	39
KARNATAKA		
Fresh cases	126	54
Recoveries	99	136
Deaths	0	0

Efforts on to lift AFSPA in toto: Modi

PRASANTA MAZUMDAR @Gumehati

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said efforts were on to withdraw the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) from the remaining areas of the Northeast.

Addressing a "Peace, Unity and Development Rally" in Assam's Karbi Anglong, he said old rules were being tweaked as peace was making a steady return to the Northeast as a result of the collective efforts of the state governments and the people.

"AFSPA remained enforced in many states of the Northeast for a long time but after the return of

permanent peace and also due to better administration in the past eight years, we removed it from many areas," the PM said.

He added that incidents of violence in the Northeast had dropped by around 75%. This is why AFSPA was first removed from Tripura and then Meghalaya. AFSPA had been invoked in Assam for three decades but with the improvement in the overall security situation in the past few years, it was removed from 23 districts.

"We are trying to normalise the situation in other areas as well so

that AFSPA can be removed."

Modi highlighted how the Centre's efforts had helped solve the problem of insurgency in Assam's Bodo areas, Karbi Anglong and in Tripura and the Bru (Reang) problem of Tripura-Mizoram. He expressed happiness that Assam and Meghalaya reached an agreement to resolve their boundary disputes. This will give impetus to the development aspirations of the region, he added.

Later in the day, he inaugurated seven cancer hospitals and laid the foundation of as many

others across the state, virtually from Dibrugarh. Three more cancer hospitals are expected to be operational by the year-end.

In all, 17 advanced cancer hospitals would be ready in Assam by the time it celebrates the third anniversary of the BJP-led coalition government in May 2024. These hospitals have been/are being built with funds from Tata Trusts and the state government.

Tata Trusts chairman Ratan Tata said, "Today is a... day that raises Assam to a higher level in terms of health care and treatment of cancer that has not been experienced by the other states in the country."



Yeh cheez badi hai Musk, Musk!
Amul
Share it, don't have it Elon!

BOMMAI, OPPN NETAS WADE INTO HINDI ROW, DEFEND SUDEEP

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

THE Twitter war between actors Kiccha Sudeep and Ajay Devgn on Hindi as the national language, has taken a political turn, with leaders of all political hues defending Sudeep.

While Congress and JDS leaders slammed the Bollywood actor as well as the BJP government for attempting to impose Hindi on all states, Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai, his cabinet ministers and the Kannada cinema fraternity came forward to defend Sudeep's stand.

The opposition hit out at Devgn for calling Hindi "Rashtrabhasha", while Karnataka Rakshana Vedike members staged a protest in Bengaluru against the actor.

In Hubballi, Bommai told reporters that whatever Sudeep had tweeted was correct. "After states were formed based on region, the regional language is supreme for those states, and one has to respect it," he said.

In a series of tweets, former CM HD Kumaraswamy defended Sudeep. "Ajay Devgn is not only hyper in nature but also shows his ludicrous behaviour. Devgn must realise that Kannada cinema is outgrowing Hindi film industry."

Kumaraswamy said Hindi cinema has grown because of encouragement by Kannadigas. Devgn shouldn't forget that his first movie, "Phool aur Kaante", ran for a year in Bengaluru. "An addiction for primacy is dividing the country," he said.

CONTINUED ON: P6



Ajay Devgn is not only hyper in nature but also shows his ludicrous behaviour. Devgn must realise that Kannada cinema is outgrowing Hindi film industry.

HD Kumaraswamy, former Chief Minister

Top priority is for Kannada: Narayan

Minister for Higher Education Dr C N Ashwath Narayan said the top priority in the state is for Kannada, but it is necessary to treat "Hindi as the communicative language at the national level."

Panel will be set up to curb hate speech: CM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Hubballi

THE State will form a committee to curb hate speech, in accordance with instructions of the Supreme Court, Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai said here on Thursday.

He told reporters that the apex court's order would be strictly followed. However, he felt that hate speech is on the rise all over the country, especially on social media platforms.

Recently, in its verdict on hate speeches aired during the Dharam Sansad held in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, the apex court had called for zero tolerance on the part of Central and state governments, and directed states to form special task forces to prevent hate crimes. It also in-

sisted on gathering intelligence reports on people who are likely to air hate speeches.

Apart from setting up a task force, the court also directed Central and state governments to take steps to stop dissemination of irresponsible and explosive messages, videos and other material on social media platforms, which have a tendency to incite mob violence and lynchings.

Replying to a query, Bommai said that people of all religions have coexisted and lived peacefully in India. However, in other countries, terrorism is being spread in the name of religion. If everybody follows what the Constitution says, peace will prevail. No one should advise others on maintaining communal harmony, he added.



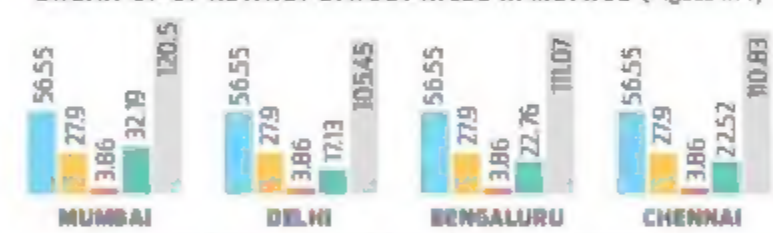
THE FUEL CESS-POOL

A big part of the fuel taxes the Centre collects needs to be shared with states, right? But the mop-up workload is through cess, which is not shared and forms the bulk of the central taxes. Here's how:

- Centre collects ₹26.50 as cess out of the total ₹2790 tax on petrol per litre. It means only ₹14 is shared with states. As for diesel, only ₹1.80 is shared out of the total tax of ₹21.80
- According to the 15th Finance Commission report, Centre has to share 41% of the divisible pool of taxes. However, divisible pool does not include cess
- Over five years till FY21, the Centre's fuel tax went up by 54%, while that of states grew just 15%. Of the total ₹6.37 lakh crore tax collected in FY21, Centre pocketed 66%

FUEL	Basic excise duty (₹/litre)	CESSES		
		Special additional excise duty (₹/litre)	Agrifinfa & development cess (AIDC) (₹/litre)	Additional excise duty (road and infra cess) (₹/litre)
Petrol	140	0	2.50	13
Diesel	180	0	4	8

BREAK-UP OF RETAIL PETROL PRICES IN METROS (Figures in ₹)



Source: Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell and HPCI

CCI PROBE

Surprise raids on Amazon, Flipkart anchor sellers

RAM SAHGAL @Mumbai

THE Competition Commission of India (CCI) has conducted raids on the premises of anchor sellers of Amazon and Flipkart across Delhi, Bengaluru and Mumbai to probe complaints of predatory pricing and deep discounting.

The raided firms include Cloudtail and Appario Retail, the former a joint venture between Amazon and N R Narayana Murthy's Catamaran and the latter with Patni group.

"There was an element of cluelessness and surprise among sellers as the CCI normally doesn't conduct raids in such matters," said a source.

"Probably some clarity could emerge by Friday by when sellers can decide their course of action," another source said.

The CCI and Amazon did not immediately respond to *TNIE* queries on the raids while Flipkart could not be immediately contacted for comment.

Amazon and Flipkart also have stakes in some sellers who list on their platforms.

This often leads to allegations of conflict of interest as such sellers, backed by the e-commerce giants' deep pockets, resort to predatory pricing and deep discounting to attract customers.

Lauding the CCI for the action, Praveen Khandelwal, secretary-general of Confederation of All India Traders, said, "The CCI has been raising strong objections against malpractices of Amazon and Flipkart. He said Murthy's role should also be investigated."

WITH THIS ISSUE

CITY'S BEST WEEKEND GUIDE
INDULGE
32 PAGES, INCLUDING 16 OF INDULGE (TABLOID)



PICKING UP PIECES

Locals remove debris from destroyed houses after a Russian rocket, hit by Ukraine's anti-aircraft system, struck a residential area in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine on Thursday | A1 | P12

EXPRESS READ

Moral values taught: Clarence Principal

Bengaluru: Amidst the controversy over allegedly forcing students to study Bible, Clarence High School Principal Dr Jerry George Mathews said that they only teach moral values from the stories of Bible in their moral science classes, and the parents are well-informed about it | P2

Biden-Modi meet during Quad summit on May 24

Washington: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Joe Biden will meet during the Quad summit in Tokyo on May 24, the White House said. The leaders are expected to discuss a range of topics including security and economic ties, and the challenges China poses to the region | P9

BSF GESTURE

BSF jawan gets rare airlift from LoC post to get married

FAYAZ WANI & ASHISH MEHTA
@Srinagar / Bhubaneswar

EVACUATING soldiers and civilians by air from remote locations happens all the time during exigencies. The thumb rule till now has been to fly them out if they require immediate medical attention.

For the first time in the Border Security Force's history, it added another factor to the exigency list — marriage. It allowed airlifting a jawan from his post along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir so as to help him reach

home in Odisha time for his wedding on Monday.

BSF constable Narayana Behera (30), a resident of Adipur village of Dhenkanal district of Odisha, is posted at Machil sector along the LoC in north Kashmir. He is scheduled to get married on May 2. But since snow-bound Machil's road link to Srinagar is not open yet, he put in a request for airlifting as a special case.

His unit commanders escalated the matter to BSF Inspector General (Kashmir frontier) Raja Babu Singh. Sensing the urgency, IG Singh granted

permission, saying welfare of troops was his "first and foremost priority."



In view of the poor weather, it was decided to airlift him on Thursday. He was flown out in a Cheetah helicopter from the LoC to Srinagar in the morning, an officer said. Happily, the weather gods were accommodative. Had it been scheduled for a little later, the flight might not have been possible as weather condition deteriorated soon enough.

After reaching Srinagar, Behera boarded a Delhi-bound plane from where he was to take a connecting flight to Bhubaneswar.

Behera expressed his gratitude to his Commandant, IG and DIG of BSF Kashmir for the airlift. "I am posted in such a difficult terrain that I had to request my Commandant to airlift me so that I can tie the knot. All jawans are confident that whenever they need any help, the seniors will come forward to their rescue," said Behera, who was in Delhi when this report was filed. "My father Khageswar Behera and all other family members are very happy that I am returning home," he told *TNIE*.

Airtel hangs up, retired CA fights case for ₹20 refund

YATHIRAJU @Bengaluru

BHARTI Airtel Limited was directed to refund Rs 20 and ex parte to pay Rs 500 each towards damages and litigation expenses to AM Hussain Shareef, who fought his legal battle on his own with the help of an online legal firm before the Consumer Commission.

Shareef, a retired chartered accountant, stays with his son at Doddakanalli. He had recharged Rs 49 which expired on August 4, 2021. On August 7, 2021, he recharged Rs 20 online, which was confirmed by a message. The

talk time was Rs 14.95 but the incoming and outgoing calls were stopped on that day and he got a message informing him that the recharge was invalid. After repeated attempts and losing his money, he approached an online legal platform which assisted him and charged a nominal fee to prepare the complaint which was filed in November 2021.

The Bangalore Additional District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission not only directed Airtel to refund Rs 20 but also ordered ex parte to pay Rs 500 each as damages and litigation expenses to Shareef. P5